



FACT SHEET

Module 6.3

Avoiding Drowsy Driving

Prevent drowsiness before you take the wheel

- Get adequate sleep – adults need at least 8 to 9 hours to maintain alertness.
- Prepare route carefully to identify total distance, stopping points and other logistic considerations.
- Avoid medications that cause drowsiness.
- Avoid driving through the night and at other times you are normally asleep

How to maintain alert while driving

- Protect yourself from glare and eyestrain with sunglasses.
- Avoid heavy foods.
- Be aware of down time during the day.
- Have another person ride with you, and take turns driving.
- Take periodic breaks – about every 100 miles or 2 hours during long trips.
- Stop driving and get some rest or take a 15 to 20 minute nap.
- Consume caffeine. This can increase awareness for a few hours, but do not drink too much. It will eventually wear off. Do not rely on caffeine to prevent fatigue.

Ineffective ways to stay awake

- “Toughing it out”
- Playing the radio loudly.
- Driving at a faster or slower speed.
- Chewing gum.
- Opening the windows.

Get your rest

It is usually not a good idea to sleep in a vehicle at the side of the road, but there may be times when it is safer than continuing to drive. If you must stop along the side of the road:

- Find a populated, lighted area.
- Stop where security is present or make sure you are as far off the highway as possible.
- Open windows slightly, but not enough to allow entry from outside.
- Lock all doors and turn off the engine.
- Turn on parking lights and turn off other electrical equipment.
- After you rest, if safe, get out of the vehicle and walk a few minutes before driving.
- Sleeping for more than 20 minutes can make you groggy for at least 5 minutes after awakening.